THE PLANET

SATURDAY.....JULY 17, 1909.

dealer looked impatiently up.

It was a showdown. No one watching the two men under the window breathed for a moment. Whispering Smith, motionless, only watched the half-closed eyes. "You can't shoot craps," he said, coldly. "What can you shoot, Pearline? You can't stop a man on horseback."

Du Sang knew he must try for a quick kill or make a retreat. He took in the field at a glance. Kennedy's teeth gleamed only ten feet away, and with his right hand half

"Take Your Hand from Your Gun, You Albino!"

under his coat lapel he toyed with his watch-chain. McCloud had moved in from the slot machine and stood at the point of the table, looking at Du Sang and laughing at him. Whispering Smith threw off all pretense. "Take your hand away from your gun, you albino! I'll blow your head off left-handed if you pull! Will you get out of this town to-night? If you can't drop a man in the saddle at 250 yards, what do you think you'd look like after a break with me? Go back to the whelp that hired you, and tell him when he wants a friend of mine to send a man that can shoot. If you are within 20 miles of Medicine Bend at daylight I'll rope you like a fat cow and drag you down Front street!"

Du Sang, with burning eyes, shrank narrower and smaller into his corner, ready to shoot if he had to, but not liking the chances. No man in Williams Cache could pull or shoot with Du Sang, but no man in the mountains had ever drawn successfully against the man that faced him.

Whispering Smith saw that he would not draw. He taunted him again in low tones, and, backing away, spoke laughingly to McCloud. While Kennedy covered the corner, Smith backed to the door and waited for the two to join him. They halted a moment at the door, then they backed slowly up the steps and out into the street.

There was no talk till they reached the Wickiup office. "Now, will some of you tell me who Du Sang is?" asked McCloud, after Kennedy and Whispering Smith with banter and laughing had gone over the scene.

Kennedy picked up the ruler. "The wickedest, cruelest man in the bunch—and the best shot."

"Where is your hat, George—the one he put the bullet through?" asked Whispering Smith, limp in the big chair. "Burn it up; he thinks he missed you. Burn it up now. Never let him find out what a close call you had. Du Sang! Yes, he is cold-blooded as a wild-cat and cruel as a soft bullet. Du Sang would shoot a dying man, George, just to keep him squirming in the dirt. Did you ever see such eyes in a human being, set like that and blinking so in the light? It's bad enough to watch a man when you can see his eyes. Here's hoping we're done with him!"

CHAPTER XVI.

New Plans.

Callahan crushed the tobacco under his thumb in the palm of his right hand. "So I am sorry to add," he concluded to McCloud, "that you are now out of a job." The two men were facing each other across the table in McCloud's office. "Personally, I am not sorry to say it, either," added Callahan, slowly filling the bowl of his pipe.

McCloud said nothing to the point, as there seemed to be nothing to say until he had heard more. "I never knew before that you were left-handed," he returned, evasively.

"It's a lucky thing, because it won't do for a freight-traffic man, nowadays, to let his right hand know what his left hand does," observed Callahan, feeling for a match. "I am the only left-handed man in the traffic department, but the man that handles the rebates, Jimmie Black, is cross-eyed. Bucks offered to send him to Chicago to have Bryson straighten his eyes, but Jimmie thinks it is better to have them as they are for the present, so he can look at a thing in two different ways—one for the interstate commerce commission and one for himself. You haven't heard, then?" continued Callahan, returning to his riddle about McCloud's job. "Why, Lance Dunning has gone into the United States court and got an injunction against us on the Crawling Stone line—tied us up tighter than zero. No more construction there for a year at least. Dunning comes in for himself and for a cousin who is his ward, and three or four little ranchers have filed bills—so it's up to the lawyers for 80 per cent. of the gate receipts and peace. Personally, I'm glad of it. It gives you a chance to look after this operating for a year yourself. We are going to be swamped with freight traffic this year, and I want it moved through the mountains like checkers for the next six months. You know what I mean, George."

To McCloud the news came, in spite of himself, as a blow. The results he had attained in building through the lower valley had given him a name among the engineers of the whole line. The splendid showing of the winter construction, on which he had depended to enable him to finish the whole work within the year, was by this news brought to naught. Those of the railroad men who said he could not deliver a completed line within the year could never be answered now. And there was some slight bitterness in the reflection that the very stumbling-block to hold him back, to rob him of his chance for a reputation with men like Glover and Bucks, should be the lands of Dicksie Dunning.

He made no complaint. On the division he took hold with new energy and bent his faculties on the operating problems. At Marion's he saw Dicksie at intervals, and only to fall more hopelessly under her spell each time. She could be serious and she could be volatile and she could be something between which he could never quite make out. She could be serious with him when he was serious, and totally irresponsible the next minute with Marion. On the other hand, when McCloud attempted to be flippant, Dicksie could be confusingly grave. Once when he was bantering with her at Marion's she tried to say something about her regret that complications over the right of way should have arisen; but McCloud made light of it, and waved the matter aside as if he were a cavalier. Dicksie did not like it, but it was only that he was afraid she would realize he was a mere railroad superintendent with hopes of a record for promotion quite blasted. And as if this obstacle to a greater reputation were not enough, a wilier enemy threatened in the spring to leave only shreds and patches of what he had already earned.

The Crawling Stone river is said to embody, historically, all of the deceits known to mountain streams. Below the Box Canyon it plows through a great bed of yielding silt, its own deposit between the two imposing lines of bluffs that resist its wanderings from side to side of the wide valley. This fertile soil makes up the rich lands that are the envy of less fortunate regions in the Great Basin; but the Crawling Stone is not a river to give quiet title to one acre of its own making. The toil of its centuries spreads beautifully green under the June skies, and the unsuspecting settler, lulled into security by many years of the river's repose, settles on its level bench land and lays out his long lines of possession; but the Sioux will tell you in their own talk that this man is but a tenant at will; that in another time and at another place the stranger will inherit his fields; and that the Crawling Stone always comes back for its own.

The winter had been an unusual one even in a land of winters. The season's fall of snow had not been above an average, but it had fallen in the spring and had been followed by excessively low temperatures throughout the mountains. June came again, but a strange June. The first rise of the Crawling Stone had not moved out the winter frost, and the stream lay bound from bank to bank, and for hundreds of miles, under three feet of ice. When June opened, backward and cold, there had been no spring. Heavy frosts lasting until the middle of the month gave sudden way to summer heat, and the Indians on the upper valley reservation began moving back into the hills. Then came the rise. Creek after creek in the higher mountains, ice-bound for six months, burst without warning into flood. Soft winds struck with the sun and stripped the mountain walls of their snow. Rains set in on the desert, and far in the high northwest the Crawling Stone lifting its four-foot cap of ice like a bed of feathers began rolling it end over end down the valley. In the Box, 40 feet of water struck the canyon walls and ice-floes were hurled like torpedoes against the granite spurs; the Crawling Stone was starting after its own.

When the river rose, the earlier talk of Dunning's men had been that the Crawling Stone would put an end to the railroad pretensions by washing the 250 miles of track back to the Peace river, where it had started. This much in the beginning was easy to predict; but the railroad men had turned out in force to fight for their holdings, and while the ranchers were laughing, the river was flowing over the bench lands in the upper valley.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Crawling Stone Rise.

So sudden was the onset of the river that the trained riders of the big ranch were taken completely aback, and hundreds of head of Dunning cattle were swept away before they could be removed to points of safety. Fresh alarms came with every hour of the day and night, and the telephones up and down the valley rang incessantly with appeals from neighbor to neighbor. Lance Dunning, calling out the reserves of his vocabulary, swore tremendously and directed the operations against the river. These seemed, indeed, to consist mainly of hard riding and hard language on the part of everybody. Murray Sinclair, although he had sold his ranch on the Crawling Stone and was concentrating his holdings on the Frenchman, was everywhere in evidence. He was the first at a point of danger and the last to ride away from the slipping acres where the muddy flood undercut; but no defiance seemed to disturb the Crawling Stone, which kept alarmingly at work.

Above the alfalfa lands on the long bench north of the house the river, in changing its course many years earlier, had left a depression known as Mud lake. It had become separated from the main channel of the Crawling Stone by a high, narrow barrier in the form of a bench deposited by the receding waters of some earlier flood, and added to by sandstorms sweeping among the willows that overspread it. Without an effective head or definite system of work the efforts of the men at the Stone ranch were of no more consequence than if they had spent their time in waving blankets at the river. Twenty men riding in together to tell Lance Dunning that the river was washing out the tree claims above Mud lake made no perceptible difference in the event. Dicksie, though an inexperienced girl, saw with helpless clearness the futility of it all.

Terror seized Dicksie. She telephoned in her distress for Marion, begging her to come up before they should all be swept away; and Marion, turning the shop over to Katie Dancing, got into the ranch-wagon that Dicksie had sent and started for the Crawling Stone.

At noon Marion arrived. The ranch-house was deserted, and the men were all at the river. Puss stuck her head out of the kitchen window, and Dicksie ran out and threw herself into Marion's arms. Late news from the front had been the worst; the cutting above Mud lake had weakened the last barrier that held off the river, and every available man was fighting the current at that point.

Marion heard it all while eating a luncheon. Dicksie, beset with anxiety, could not stay in the house. The man that had driven Marion over, saddled horses in the afternoon and the two women rode up above Mud lake, now become through rainfall and seepage from the river a long, shallow lagoon. For an hour they watched the shoveling and carrying of sand-bags, and rode toward the river to the very edge of the disappearing willows, where the bank was melting away before the undercut of the resistless current. They rode away with a common feeling—a conviction that the fight was a losing one, and that another day would see the ruin complete.

"Dicksie," exclaimed Marion—they were riding to the house as she spoke—"I'll tell you what we can do!" She hesitated a moment. "I will tell you what we can do! Are you plucky?"

Dicksie looked at Marion pathetically.

"If you are plucky enough to do it, we can keep the river off yet. I have an idea. I will go, but you must come along."

"Marion, what do you mean? Don't you think I would go anywhere to save the ranch? I should like to know where you dare go in this country that I dare not!"

"Then ride with me over to the railroad camp by the new bridge. We will ask Mr. McCloud to bring some of his men over. He can stop the river; he knows how."

Dicksie caught her breath. "Oh, Marion! that would do no good, even I could do it. Why, the railroad has been all swept away in the lower valley."

"How do you know?"

"So every one says."

"Who is every one?"

"Cousin Lance, Mr. Sinclair—all the men. I heard that a week ago."

"Dicksie, don't believe it. You don't know these railroad men. They understand this kind of thing; cattlemen, you know, don't. If you will go with me we can get help. I feel just as sure that those men can control the river as I do that I am looking at you—that is, if anybody can. The question is do you want to make the effort?"

They talked until they left the horses and entered the house. When they sat down, Dicksie put her hands to her face. "Oh, I wish you had said nothing about it! How can I go to him and ask for help now—after Cousin Lance has gone into court about the line and everything? And of course my name is in it all."

"Dicksie, don't raise specters that have nothing to do with the case. If we go to him and ask him for help he will give it to us if he can; if he can't, what harm is done? He has been up and down the river for three weeks, and he has an army of men camped over by the bridge. I know that, because Mr. Smith rode in from there a few days ago."

"What, Whispering Smith? Oh, if he is there I would not go for worlds!"

"Pray, why not?"

"Why, he is such an awful man!"

"That is absurd, Dicksie."

Dicksie looked grave. "Marion, no man in this part of the country has a good word to say for Whispering Smith."

"Perhaps you have forgotten, Dicksie, that you live in a very rough part of the country," returned Marion, coolly. "No man that he has ever hunted down would have anything pleasant to say about him; nor would the friends of such a man be likely to say a good word of him. There are many on the range, Dicksie, that have no respect for life or law or anything else, and they naturally hate a man like Whispering Smith—"

"But Marion, he killed—"

"I know. He killed a man named Williams a few years ago, while you were at school—one of the worst men that ever infested this country. Williams Cache is named after that man; he made the most beautiful spot in all these mountains a nest of thieves and murderers. But did you know that Williams shot down Gordon Smith's only brother, a trainmaster, in cold blood in front of the Wickiup at Medicine Bend? No, you never heard that in this part of the country, did you? They had a cow-thief for sheriff then, and no officer in Medicine Bend would go after the murderer. He rode in and out of town as if he owned it, and no one dared say a word, and, mind you, Gordon Smith's brother had never seen the man in his life until he walked up and shot him dead. Oh, this was a peaceful country a few years ago! Gordon Smith was right-of-way man in the mountains then. He buried his brother, and asked the officers what they were going to do about getting the murderer. They laughed at him. He made no protest, except to ask for a deputy United States marshal's commission. When he got it he started for Williams Cache after Williams in a buckboard—think of it, Dicksie—and didn't they laugh at him! He did not even know the trails, a imagine riding 200 miles in a buckboard to arrest a man in the mountains! He was gone six weeks, and came back with Williams' body strapped to the buckboard behind him. He never told the story; all he said when he handed in his commission and went back to his work was that the man was killed in a fair fight. Hate him! No wonder they hate him—the Williams Cache gang and all their friends on the range! Your cousin thinks it policy to placate that element, hoping that they won't steal your cattle if you are friendly with them. I know nothing about that, but I do know something about Whispering Smith. It will be a bad day for Williams Cache when they start him up again. But what has that to do with your trouble? He will not eat you up if you go to the camp, Dicksie. You are just raising bogies."

They had moved to the front porch and Marion was sitting in the rocking chair. Dicksie stood with her back against one of the pillars and looked at her. As Marion finished Dicksie turned and, with her hand on her forehead, looked in wretchedness of mind out on the valley. As far, in many directions, as the eye could reach the waters spread yellow in the flood of sunshine across the lowlands. There was a moment of silence. Dicksie turned her back on the alarming sight. "Marion, I can't do it!"

"Oh, yes, you can if you want to, Dicksie!" Dicksie looked at her with tearless eyes. "It is only a question of being plucky enough," insisted Marion.

"Pluck has nothing to do with it!" exclaimed Dicksie, in fiery tones. "I should like to know why you are always talking about my not having courage! This isn't a question of courage. How can I go to a man that I talked to as I talked to him in your house and ask for help? How can I go to him after my cousin has threatened to kill him, and gone into court to prevent his coming on our land? Shouldn't I look beautiful asking help from him?"

Marion rocked with perfect composure. "No, dear, you would not look beautiful asking help, but you would look sensible. It is so easy to be beautiful and so hard to be sensible."

"You are just as horrid as you can be, Marion Sinclair!"

"I know that, too, dear. All I wanted to say is that you would look very sensible just now in asking help from Mr. McCloud."

"I don't care—I won't do it. I will never do it, not if every foot of the ranch tumbles into the river. I hope it will! Nobody cares anything about me. I have no friends but thieves and outlaws."

"Dicksie!" Marion rose.

"That is what you said."

"I did not. I am your friend. How dare you call me names?" demanded Marion, taking the petulant girl in her arms. "Don't you think I care anything about you? There are people in this country that you have never seen who know you and love you almost as much as I do. Don't let any silly pride prevent your being sensible, dear." Dicksie burst into tears. Marion drew her over to the settee, and she had her cry out. When it was over they changed the subject. Dicksie went to her room. It was a long time before she came down again, but Marion rocked in patience; she was resolved to let Dicksie fight it out herself.

When Dicksie came down, Marion stood at the foot of the stairs. The young mistress of Crawling Stone ranch descended step by step very slowly. "Marion," she said, simply, "I will go with you."

(To Be Continued.)

THE BREMEN.

"Hoch der Bremen!" is the cry,
From the people ringing,
To the German visitor
Friendly message bringing.
Hail the stranger to this port,
Burden of our ditty,
As all join in its refrain:
"Welcome to our city!".

In the nations that have sent
Brain and brawn to ours,
Putting strong blood in our veins,
Building up our powers,
Few before the Fatherland
Make a better showing;
Few deserve in better need
Thanks of our owing.

So we greet this friendship's mark
With a friend's returning;
Ever for a closer bond
'Twixt our people yearning
If o'er seas we had no signs,
More would be the pity.
So we cry, with three times three:
"Welcome to our city!"

SUSPICIOUS.

Mrs. Simling—I hope you came out of that horse trade with a clear conscience?

Si Simling—Yes; but it kind o' worries me. My conscience is so unusually clear that I can't help feelin' I must 'a' got the wust o' the trade."

Enough Said.

"What sort of fellow is he?"

"He lays his right index finger against his cheek to have his picture taken."

Another Star.

Student of Astronomy—I have discovered a new star, professor.

Professor—What's she playing in, my boy?—Harvard Lampoon.

CURRENT VERSE.

A Song Against Care.

O Care!
Thou art a cloak too heavy to be borne,
Glittering with tears, and gay with painted ilies—
(For seldom—seldom art thou stained and torn,
Showing a tattered lining, and the bare
Bruised body of thy wearer); thou art fair
To look at, O thou garment of our pride!
A net of colors, thou dost catch the wise;
He lays aside his wisdom for thy sake . . .
And Beauty hides her loveliness in thee . . .
And after . . . when men know the agony
Of thy great weight of splendor, and would shake
Thee swiftly from their shoulders, cast aside
The burden of thy jeweled bands that break
Their very hearts . . . often it is too late,
They fear that foes will meet them and deride
When they are stripped of all their golden state.
But some are brave . . . but some among us dare
Cry out against thy torment and be free!
And I would rather a gay beggar be,
Than that thy clanking pomp should cover me,
O Care! . . .
—Olive Douglas, in Academy.

An Old Book's Quest.

Timestain'd and ragged, old and worn,
I come to you, my friend, and ask
A cosy spot in some warm nook
Of your dear home; where night and morn
You go to rest from care or task,
And seek real comfort in a book.

Here may you find in heart of me,
The silent comradeship you crave;
Instinct with life, though quaint of phrase,
And fill'd with cheery sympathy—
The cheer that will depression save,
And herald be of happy days—

And should your hand but rest on me,
In recognition of my worth;
Or should your smiling eyes alight
On some odd antique fantasy,
I shall be glad that I'm on earth
And have outlived decay and blight.

Deny me not a haven, friend!
Scorn not my rusty dress and look!
Remember, I have been quite true;
Such friendship should not have an end—
Should live—as does this old, old book,
That claims a place and home with you.
—Elvira Floyd Froemcke.

Only a Little While.

Only a little while since first we met,
And soon the sea, with many a weary mile,
Shall sever us forever, Sweet . . . and yet
Will it be very easy to forget?—
Only a little while!

Only a little while that I may claim
The whole soul's breath of you without denial,
And see your eyes grow golden with a flame
That is not love, yet hath no other name—
Only a little while!

Only a little while to use my art
So that some day you may look back, and smile
Out of a joy wherein I have no part
On that old self of yours that filled my heart—
Only a little while!
—Bruno Hooker, in the Forum.

The Closing Door.

Why will you lock the garden door
That long swung wide for me?
I seek to enter in no more,
But do not turn the key.

I only ask to stand outside
And through the doorway see
That rose, as of old, abide
Where once you walked with me.

To see the happy lilies grow—
Ah! happy once were we!—
And watch the joyous hawthorns blow
Upon our trysting-tree.

So do not lock the door that is
The gate of heaven to me,
But leave a little space for bliss,
And throw away the key.
—Rhoda Hero Dunn, in Smart Set.

I'm Not Myself at All!

O, I'm not myself at all, Molly dear, Molly, dear,
I'm not myself at all!
Nothin' earin', nothin' knowin', 'tis after you I'm goin',
Faith, your shadow 'tis I'm growing', Molly, dear,
Since a change o'er me there came, sure you might change your name—
And 'twould just come to the same, Molly dear,
'Twould just come to the same;
For if you and I were one, all confusion would be gone,
And 'twould simplify the matter entirely;
And 'twould save us so much bother when we'd both be one another—
So listen now to reason, Molly Brierly,
O, I'm not myself at all!
—Samuel Lover.

After the Singer Is Dead.

Bright is the ring of words
When the right man rings them.
Fair is the fall of songs
When the singer sings them.
Still they are caroled and said—
On wings they are carried—
After the singer is dead
And the maker buried.

Low as the singer lies
In the field of heather,
Songs of his fashion bring
The swains together.
And when the west is red
With the sunset embers,
The lover lingers and sings,
And the maid remembers.
—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Appreciation.

They look upon the flowers fair
Which smile to welcome spring;
They note the birds which cleave the air
With graceful, glossy wing.

He knows she is not like the rest
And waits to hear the words
She'll speak with fine poetic zest
Of blossoms and of birds.

She muses on the landscape gay,
And soon the words fall pat
In purling accents: "Would not they
Look lovely on a hat?"
—Washington Star.

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